



Executive Board

Hundred and ninety-ninth session

199 EX/20

PARIS, 17 March 2016
Original: English

Item 20 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF 38 C/RESOLUTION 72 AND 197 EX/DECISION 33 CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

This document is submitted pursuant to 38 C/Resolution 72 and [197 EX/33](#). The present document provides a report on developments since the 197th session of the Executive Board.

There are no financial or administrative implications.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 25.

Implementation of 38 C/Resolution 72 and 197 EX/Decision 33 concerning educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories

1. The present document reports on assistance provided to the Palestinian Authority and to relevant Palestinian stakeholders over the reporting period, from July 2015 to January 2016.

2. The present document provides an overview of UNESCO's technical assistance, capacity-building efforts, and implementation of a wide array of development-oriented projects. In addition to the information provided herewith, a detailed overview of UNESCO's emergency recovery response in Gaza is provided in document [199 EX/19](#) ("Occupied Palestine").

Education

3. During the period under review, UNESCO continued its support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in Palestine, providing technical assistance, building capacities of national institutions, implementing projects in the West Bank and Gaza, and providing support in the areas of planning, management and coordination of the Education Sector.

4. UNESCO continues to follow closely the situation of educational institutions in Palestine. In this regard, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine reported to the Secretariat, by letter dated 18 January 2016, about an incursion during the night of 10 to 11 January on the campus of the Birzeit University in the West Bank, indicating that allegedly "*computer equipment was seized and considerable damage caused*". The Delegation of Palestine requested this information to be included in the present document.

5. Following the agreement on the reform and the reactivation of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) in late 2014, UNESCO has actively supported its work (quarterly meetings, Annual Sector Review), in its capacity as technical adviser of the ESWG. The reactivation of the ESWG also resulted in the creation and revitalization of a number of technical groups in line with the reform envisaged in the Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP), namely: non-formal education; pre-school education; basic education; secondary education; TVET; higher education; education in emergency; curricula reform, inclusive education, and management reform. UNESCO is a member of all of these technical groups, and is the co-Chair for the Inclusive Education group, as well as technical advisor to the group on Higher Education.

6. UNESCO continues to follow up closely with the committee for the new law on General Education and plays the role as technical expert and convening agency for the United Nations group and the Joint Financing Partners to ensure the best possible feedback and recommendations on the draft law in line with relevant international standards. Final comments were shared with the MoEHE, and will be discussed in February 2016, in preparation for the final draft law. (See: *Report on the Annual Sector Review organized by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Palestine*.)

7. UNESCO continues providing technical assistance to the Palestinian authorities on its reporting on the various international human rights normative instruments recently accessed by Palestine in close liaison with relevant United Nations agencies and

international stakeholders, most notably the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (CESCR); the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC); the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW); and the *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (CRPD), with special focus on the educational components of the legal obligations to the United Nations Treaty Bodies arising from the accession to such treaties.

8. With support from UNESCO, representatives from the MoEHE participated in the first Arab Regional Meeting on Education 2030: "Towards Collective Action in Achieving Education 2030 Goal in the Arab Region", which took place in Cairo/Egypt (December 2015). The meeting concluded the Arab Regional Roadmap for Education 2030.

9. As part of its efforts to support inclusive education, UNESCO has continued to successfully coordinate the EFA Package in Palestine, which involves nine United Nations agencies: FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP, WHO and UNESCO. Special focus was given to inclusive and child-friendly education, through pilot child-led activities/innovative teaching and learning in 70 schools (58 governmental schools and 12 UNRWA ones), both in the West Bank and in Gaza. An evaluation is planned at the completion of the first phase with the aim to highlight successes and provide recommendations for a possible second phase of the package. As part of the implementation of the EFA package, UNESCO implemented a project, jointly with the MoEHE and UNWRA, in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The project "Improving Access to Quality Education for Palestinian Children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", funded by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), with further support from AGFUND, started in August 2014 and was completed in September 2015. Close to 30,000 students, and more than 13,000 teachers, have benefited from the project. Building on the success, all partners agreed on the importance of expanding those trainings to a possible Phase II of the project, to include another 200 schools both in West Bank and Gaza.

10. UNESCO continues to support vulnerable university students. With financial support from the Saudi Committee for the Relief of the Palestinian People, UNESCO has established 12 libraries, ten in the West Bank and two in Gaza. These libraries support vulnerable higher education students by providing them access to study and research library facilities, textbooks and other resource materials. Since the last reporting period, the number of users of the library facilities has continued to increase (close to 25,000 users have benefited so far from those library services). The libraries have also begun implementing a country-wide advocacy campaign on the rights to higher education in Palestine, with a particular focus on discrimination and disability.

Culture

11. **During the period under review, UNESCO continued providing technical assistance, building national capacities of relevant Palestinian cultural institutions, and implementing projects on the ground.**

12. UNESCO continues to follow closely the situation of cultural institutions and heritage sites in Palestine. In this regard, the Permanent Delegation of Palestine to UNESCO informed the Secretariat, by letter dated 8 February 2016, that the Israeli Antiquities Authority had allegedly initiated "*illegal archaeological excavations*" at the archaeological site of Khirbet En-Najjar in the Cremisan valley. By letter dated 13 March 2016, the Permanent Delegation of Israel responded to the Secretariat that after inquiry with the relevant authorities, the Permanent Delegation is "not aware of any archaeological excavations conducted by Israeli authorities in Khirbet En-Najjar" and that it would welcome receiving more specific information on such alleged excavations.

13. The fourth-year implementation of the project "*Local Development through the rehabilitation and revitalization of the historic built environment in Palestine*", funded by the Government of Sweden through SIDA, is successfully progressing. Previous phases of this project have enabled rehabilitation of 40 historic sites and on-the-job training of 187 professionals and technicians. Over the reporting period, the project helped to develop technical capacities of additional ten local architects, engineers and young professionals in the field of cultural heritage preservation through the ongoing rehabilitation of another eight historic sites in the Palestinian cities and rural localities. The interventions in the historic environment in Palestine improved access to cultural heritage for the general public and contributed to the socioeconomic development of the targeted communities.

14. A two-day training on the **1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage** was organized in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities on 24 and 25 November 2015. Thirty participants from concerned ministries, municipalities, heritage institutions and NGOs actively participated in this workshop. The training addressed key obligations and responsibilities related to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, using the example of the two World Heritage sites in Palestine to link the lectures delivered with the concrete challenges of management and state of conservation issues.

15. In close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, UNESCO organized a three-day capacity-building workshop from 17 to 19 November 2015 on the **2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**, ratified by Palestine in 2011. Thirty participants were provided with theoretical and practical information about the Convention's concrete implementation, while linking the information delivered to the local Palestinian context. The workshop enabled the establishment of a technical committee/working group for the implementation of the 2005 Convention in Palestine, including public and civil society actors and set the path for cultural policy development in Palestine by reviewing the present policies and proposing a plan and methodology framework for the new national cultural sector strategy.

16. **#Unite4Heritage Campaign in Palestine:** the following activities within the #Unite4Heritage campaign were carried out from October to December 2015:

- **Storytelling/Palestinian Hikaye** (on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity), at 25 historical sites and community libraries in different governorates in Palestine, aimed at raising awareness on the role of youth in the preservation of their own tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This activity targeted a total number of 800 young participants.
- **Voluntary and community work at cultural heritage sites in West Bank and Gaza:** Community awareness-raising and voluntary work have been carried out at five archaeological sites: Saint Hilarion in Gaza, Khirbet Al-Moreq in Hebron and the Roman Theatre and Tell Balata in Nablus and in the World Heritage property "Palestine: Land of Olives and Vines — Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir". These activities allowed youth to gain basic skills in preventive conservation and preservation and raised the awareness of the local community in and around the heritage sites. These activities involved more than 300 young volunteers.
- **Training on the role and responsibility of young people towards the preservation of heritage:** One session about the role and responsibility of youth in the preservation of heritage was held for the Arab American University students in Jenin. Two workshops were organized in Gaza on "Interactive Conservation", where 30 architects volunteered to clean and repaint the northern facade of the Great Omani Mosque in the old city of Gaza. In addition, an "Artists' Brush" oil painting workshop was organized at As-Saqqa historical mansion in Gaza for 15 young artists, featuring different artistic views of this Ottoman-period building, which was rehabilitated by UNESCO in 2014.
- **A week of "Heritage in Palestine" online activity on social media** was organized in October 2015. Young Palestinian bloggers and social media activists engaged in an intensive week-long #Unite4Heritage campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. More than 1,500 youth were directly engaged in and briefed on the campaign.

Communication and information

17. With the support of Sweden through SIDA, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and the Palestinian Anti-Corruption Commission, UNESCO organized a working seminar to support the **adoption of a right to information law** for Palestine. Senior-level representatives of the government, civil society and the media met in Ramallah on 1 and 2 December 2015 to review the latest draft of the law and agreed on amendments to bring it further in line with international standards and good practice.

18. This activity was reinforced by a series of training workshops on the right to information that targeted all segments of Palestinian society, including journalists and civil society. The workshops were implemented by the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA) with UNESCO's support within the framework of a campaign to engage journalists in promoting the right to access information and accountability in Palestine and enhance citizens' awareness. Twenty-four women and 33 men benefited from the three workshops both in West Bank and Gaza.

19. A project entitled "Enhancing the professional capacity of independent Palestinian media", funded through UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), involved an intensive media training programme for 40 journalists and editors. A new editorial policy and procedures were drafted and have been adopted by MA'AN Network.

Gender equality

20. Activities to support mainstreaming of gender equality in Palestine are implemented by UNESCO through the Palestinian Women Research and Documentation Centre (PWRDC), with funding by the Government of Norway:

- Online library and database which collects all research and data on gender in Palestine (and relevant regional and international data) to serve all stakeholders created and available at the following web address www.pwrdc.ps, including an online calendar for gender-related activities;
- On 13 October 2015, UNESCO organized through PWRDC an official launch of the two volumes of Dr Faiha Abdelhadi's book *The Political Role of Palestinian Women in the 1930s* and *The Political Role of Palestinian Women in 1965-1982*;
- With the support of UNESCO, the Ministry of Women Affairs organized two trainings for its staff on the development of policy papers and on advocacy and campaigning for gender equality;
- On 25 November 2015, UNESCO prepared a video spot in partnership with UN Women launching the *16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign*. The video spot showcased short messages from 12 heads of United Nations agencies as a way to send a strong unified message on the commitment of the United Nations to women's rights and empowerment, available at the following web address: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbRBqdJPQKA>

On 10 December 2015 International Human Rights Day, on the occasion of the closing of the campaign "Activism Against Gender-Based Violence" UNESCO, UN Women and the Ministry of Women's Affairs partnered to bring eight women storytellers from Gaza to present their performance *"The Sound of Ah"* in Ramallah performed for the first time out of Gaza.

The NET-MED Youth Programme

21. UNESCO supported trainings of the NET-MED Youth Working Group members with a view to engage in arts-based advocacy initiatives on the occasion of the International Youth Day (12 August 2015). In Gaza, more than 60 young artists painted a 100-metre mural reflecting the aspirations of youth for their society; whereas in West Bank, the Working Group organized a hike for 42 youth participants to different cultural sites in and around Nablus. This activity is part of UNESCO's #Unite4Heritage campaign.

22. From 5 to 7 October 2015, six youth members of the working group were trained on monitoring the depiction of youth in mainstream media, analysing samples from three major Palestinian television channels. In November 2015, the working groups also received basic training on media and information literacy.

23. Also as part of the NET-MED Youth Project, the development of a simulation model for Skills Forecasting in Palestine has started, in cooperation with the Palestinian Economic Policy Research Centre (MAS). A kick-off workshop for the modelling process was held on 10 December 2015 for all relevant national stakeholders, in cooperation with MAS and the External Expert Team which was identified for the regional implementation of this exercise.

Occupied Syrian Golan

24. The project for Syrian students in the occupied Syrian Golan launched in 2009 and financed by Japanese Funds-in-Trust, ended in March 2013. Without further extrabudgetary resources, this assistance could not be provided over the reporting period.

Proposed decision

25. The Executive Board may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines: The Executive Board,

1. Having considered document 199 EX/20,
2. Recalling previous decisions concerning "Educational and cultural institutions in the occupied Arab territories",
3. Decides to include this item in the agenda of its 200th session, and invites the Director-General to submit to it a follow-up report thereon.